



United Way
Peterborough & District
 Change starts here.

Local giving. Local results.

United Way made all the difference in Nicole's life

BY ANGELA KARN

Nicole Kimmerly did not have an idyllic childhood. Growing up in Oshawa with several family members who suffered from addiction and mental health issues, she became hooked on crack cocaine.

Soon Ms Kimmerly found herself living on the streets, prostituting herself, dealing drugs and stealing money to fuel her addiction.

"Two years of my life were wasted," she says. The now mother of four adds that two of her daughters were removed from her care by Children's Aid Society, one of whom given to her grandmother to raise from birth.

Ms Kimmerly went to jail in 2005 and after hitting rock bottom, was ready to turn her life around.

On June 2, 2010, Ms. Kimmerly took action and moved to Peterborough, fleeing an abusive relationship in the hopes of making a new life for herself and her son. With no money, no transportation and no connections in the area, she was dropped off at a short-term shelter until further arrangements could be made.

She received support from the United Way and its member agencies, including the Crossroads shelter where she lived for two months.

"It was the first big experience I had with the United Way and it was amazing," she says. "The Peterborough community is the only place I've ever felt welcomed and accepted, like I'm part of something more. It's become my home and my family."

After her time at Crossroads, Ms Kimmerly moved into her own apartment, where she lives with her five-year-old son today. The United Way also referred her to Trent Valley



Nicole Kimmerly attends Fleming College in preparation for a career as an addictions counsellor.

ANGELA KARN | THIS WEEK

Literacy Association (TVLA) to assist her with completing her high school education.

At the time, she had only achieved Grade 9. She could read and write but not very well, as much of what she had learned in her youth had been forgotten.

The professionals at TVLA worked with her every day for eight months and helped her learn to use a computer, in addition to improving her literacy and math skills, ultimately enabling the woman to receive her high school diploma in 2013.

"The facilitators at TVLA were amazing," she notes. "When I arrived in Peterborough I had no hope. I never would have thought that I would be able to get to this point in my life."

Ms Kimmerly was not content with only a high school education however, and is now in her final year of Fleming College's Drug and Alcohol Counselling program.

"United Way and TVLA believed that I could become a better person. They helped me through the process and supported me in my decision to

pursue higher education," she says, adding that the Fleming program has been one of her most challenging endeavors and biggest achievements.

"It's a great program and it has helped me to learn a lot about myself and others. I know that I can't change the world, my goal is just to be there for people who are struggling with addictions and help them through when they are ready."

Since getting back on her feet in 2010, Ms Kimmerly has remained involved with the United Way community, often volunteering for its

member agency YWCA, and keeps in contact with the people who helped her through what she says was one of the most difficult times in her life. Two years ago she was approached by Lisa Kouri to be on the United Way campaign launch poster.

As they drove together to the photo-shoot, they spoke about her past and everything that she has achieved since her arrival in Peterborough. Ms Kouri was deeply moved by her story and convinced her to speak at the 2012 campaign launch event.

"I was really scared of coming out and telling people about my history and my need for support, but this community has never discriminated against me for reaching out."

In fact, Ms Kimmerly's speech inspired a standing ovation.

"The United Way gave me a second chance at life," she says.

"Without them, I wouldn't be here, and I know that if I ever struggle in the future their services will be there, as long as the community continues to support them."

She explains that she continues to speak publicly to let people who are struggling know that they don't need to be afraid to ask for help, and to thank the United Way for making a difference for everyone in this community.

After graduating, Ms Kimmerly hopes to find employment at a YWCA shelter or at the Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough.

"I think it's so important to provide support for women in desperate situations. I've been there, and now I wake up every day and think to myself, 'I've made it. I want to help other women get to that place too.'"

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Volunteers united in giving back to the community

BY ANGELA KARN

Peterborough has been described many times as a giving, empathetic community, with many local people donating their time and resources to improve the area for all of its residents.

Lisa Kouri, Director of Community Engagement for the United Way, says that these volunteers are necessary to the organization's success. In fact, more than 1,000 volunteers are involved with United Way initiatives each year, with many of them contributing up to 20 hours of their time every month.

"I cannot express how much we appreciate the efforts of our volunteers," Ms. Kouri notes.



Christie Nash ran in the Island Girl Half-Marathon on Sept. 21.

"They bring their time, expertise and passion to the cause of bettering the community, and the amount of work they do is unbelievable."

She adds that although people volunteer for various reasons, including skill development and résumé building, the common thread she sees in all volunteers is a desire and willingness to help people. "We do our best to make sure their time is being used for the biggest impact, and we engage the people of our communities and workplaces in a way that they feel they are making a difference and that their efforts are valued. We have genuine appreciation for our volunteers and they understand that we can't do this without them."

One of the United Way's many volunteers is Christie Nash, a recent addition to the organization's board of directors. A young professional with two small children, Ms. Nash joined the board this June and describes her experience so far as extremely positive.

"The United Way board is very professional and sophisticated in its processes," she says. "But at the same time it feels like a big family, and I've been welcomed in warmly."

She adds that the majority of her past employment experiences before her maternity leave were in small non-profit agencies, like the ones that would apply for United Way funding.

"I have always been fascinated by the process of how United Way chooses which agencies to fund in order to make the biggest impact on the community, and I feel like I've been on the other side of that decision many times before, so my hope is that I can bring a bit of the community, non-profit perspective. As a young person, I also understand a different demographic that is emerging in the workforce now, so I hope that my experience will prove helpful to the organization."

Ms. Nash says that one of the things she has

learned through her involvement with United Way is that every small donation makes a difference.

"When you're talking about a goal of over \$2 million, it seems like the United Way really depends on the big donations from large companies. It is hard to see how giving some loose change can help, but those numbers add up very quickly when everyone chips in," she explains.

"This is a really exciting time to be involved with the United Way," she adds. "A lot of important work and thoughtful research has been done, and I think it is wonderful that they are re-imagining the way that things can be instead of allowing their structure to remain the same for tradition's sake." Ms. Nash believes that part of the reason she was selected to be on the organization's board is most likely because of her history with Trent Centre for Community

Based Education.

In 2006, she co-ordinated the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network, an initiative which has expanded as a large, umbrella organization with dozens of agency partners and hundreds of individuals involved, with the goal of making Peterborough a poverty-free community.

She also raised almost \$1,700 for United Way independently this fall, when she raised money from sponsors in order to compete in the Island Girl Half-Marathon.

When asked if she would recommend others volunteer for the United Way, Ms. Nash responds with a resounding, "Yes."

She adds that there are many opportunities to volunteer and support local charities and organizations in all sectors in Peterborough through the United Way, and that every volunteer can make a difference in the improvement of this community.

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Realistic goals, strategic funds at the heart of campaign

BY ANGELA KARN

For more than 70 years, United Way of Peterborough and District has been working to impact positive change, in part by funding agencies which address the most pressing and emerging needs in this community.

It currently provides financial support to 32 member agencies with a total of around \$1.5 million, but as of 2015 their funding structure will be shifting to an entirely new model. The number of partners slated for funding next year is 22, but many of them will receive more money than in previous cycles.

"Peterborough is following the lead of United Way organizations across the country and shifting from their previous approach as an umbrella community fundraising body to provide targeted support for the community's most vulnerable

individuals," says CEO Jim Russell. "This change is directed by more than two and a half years of research and development. We've found that it is more important to our donors and the community that we focus on the depth and effectiveness of our support to member agencies, instead of simply attempting to fund as many agencies as possible."

The United Way's new funding strategy, which they call the AIM model (Advocacy/Voice, Investment/Funding, and Mobilization/Collaboration), addresses several critical areas in order to effect lasting, measurable change. In order to advocate for the people of Peterborough, they are working to optimize their relationships with government and local social change agents, while they also invest in issues and populations to realize

the greatest possible impact for the community.

Finally, they hope to lead and influence collaboration and partnerships within the non-profit sector, encouraging strategic alignment and establishing a collaborative approach to local service delivery.

This year's fundraising goal is \$2,383,467, almost \$8,500 more than they achieved last year through their community campaign.

"Over the past 30 years, United Way has set their goal high and only hit it one third of the time," Mr. Russell says. "We wanted to be clear on a bedrock number to grow United Way from, and while the \$2.383 million is not an easy number to reach by any means, it's attainable if everyone works together. The key for us is that our goal needs to be realistic."

Of the money raised, United Way plans to dedicate up to 75 per cent or \$1.3 million to long-term priority initiatives, up to 25 per cent or \$300,000 to innovation programs, and 5 per cent or \$75,000 to small neighbourhood development grants.

One of United Way's biggest goals however, is to eliminate poverty in Peterborough. Mr. Russell explains that while he understands that poverty is the result of many factors and no single program can address them all, United Way's new investment strategy is a holistic, long-term approach that works to intervene in the lives of those experiencing poverty, as well as prevent those at risk from falling into poverty in the first place.

They will do this by working to ensure people have access to good food, nutrition and preparation knowledge and skills; support

individuals to secure and maintain stable housing; provide mentorship, recreation and education supports for youth at risk; build leadership, parenting and coping skills within vulnerable families; promote employment readiness for youth and others facing barriers to employment; and give people the necessary skills to support personal and vocational success.

"People are happy to hear that we are placing greater emphasis on addressing the underlying causes of social problems and working to effect sustainable long-term changes," says Mr. Russell. "We want to do more with your money to better the community and the United Way is well-positioned with all of the local connections to make a real difference. We're excited for the future and optimistic about this campaign."

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Look at who is new with the team

BY ANGELA KARN

Although 10 local agencies will no longer be funded under the United Way umbrella in 2015, there are several new and exciting programs to which the organization will be lending its support. The Peterborough Native Learning Program, Tracks, and an innovative training initiative developed by Fourcast's Executive Director, Donna Rogers, are all first-time recipients of United Way funding, and all three target populations that have been largely neglected in the past.

The Peterborough Native Learning Program offers help for adults who want to improve their reading, writing or math skills. Their students are Native and non-Native, and their services are free and confidential.

The program works to assist individuals in achieving apprenticeship in a trade, their High

School diplomas, post-secondary education, employment and independence.

They are primarily funded by the Literacy and Basic Skills Program, of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, but United Way support will allow the Centre to expand their programming and take on additional students.

To find out more about Peterborough Native Learning Program, contact the administrators at 705-741-0798 or visit www.pnlp.org

Tracks, a program developed by the Kawartha World Issues Centre, is an innovative program designed to engage youth in learning about sciences and indigenous culture. "I'm really excited about this project," says program co-ordinator Robyn Smith. "We're weaving traditional aboriginal cultural knowledge

with western science, and using elements of both to create a broader perspective for students. Our goal is to spark an interest in education and give aboriginal students pride in their cultural heritage."

Founded in 2010, the program addresses the lack of aboriginal education in high school, especially in math and science and empowers youth to see themselves as scientists.

It is delivered to students through school workshops, an after-school club with the Nogojiwanong Friendship Centre, outreach activities at powwows and festivals, in addition to summer camps held throughout the region. With United Way funding, organizers hope to train teachers and educators to deliver these workshops as well and also increase the capacity to work with volunteers in order to provide young indigenous people with leadership opportunities.

To learn more about Tracks, visit www.kwic.info

Although the final program is in its early planning stages, Donna Rogers wants to provide collaborative community services for helping professionals, in order to provide training to these professionals to intervene most effectively in cases where there are substance abuse issues at play. This could create a huge impact on the way people suffering with addictions are treated in this community.

She intends to work with partners in social services, school boards, healthcare providers, community agencies and more.

Funding amounts for these programs has not been confirmed by United Way yet, and negotiations are still underway. More detailed funding information for United Way member agencies will be available by Dec. 1.

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